

AMHERST COUNCIL ON AGING MINUTES
December 8, 2005

Members Present: Barbara Sutherland (Co-Chair), Doris Holden (Treasurer), Tom McAuley, Frank Lattuca, Elsie Fetterman, Susan Whitbourne

Absent: Henry Peirce, Al Byam, Rosemary Kofler

Staff Present: Nancy Pagano (Interim Director/Program Director), Karen Erman (Administrative Assistant), Maura Plante (Program Director/Services), Marlene Barnett (Program Coordinator), Anita Chan-Randall (Program Assistant)

Others: Marge Babb, Ed Kaler, Hwei-Ling Greeney (Select Board Member)

Welcome

Meeting called to order at 9:08 AM. Barbara Sutherland, Co-Chair, welcomed all members and guests. Nancy Pagano announced that Board Member, Henry Peirce is gravely ill and is in hospice at his daughter's house. A card for Henry was passed around for all to sign.

Minutes of Meeting

Minutes of October 6, 2005, were reviewed and accepted as written.

SENIOR TRUST

Treasurer's Report:

Doris Holden reported that there was little activity in the past month. The balance in the checking account is \$542.62. The total assets are \$72,774.97. The Treasurer's report was accepted as written.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

Future of the Senior Trust (Update):

Nancy spoke of the implications and limitations of moving the Senior Trust money to the Town or to the Community Foundation. One of the biggest concerns is mailing out *The Senior Spirit* newsletter. The newsletter is financed by donations and advertisements. The newsletter is now currently mailed out under the non-profit status of the Trust's 501(C) 3 and the rate is much lower than it would be mailing under the umbrella of the town's bulk rate or if the money is transferred to the Community Foundation. (Nancy passed out a chart comparing the rates). Also, beginning in January 2006 postage is going up two cents each letter.

Another concern is running the Travel Club. Money has to be accessible and it is not known how the Community Foundation will be able to handle this. Also, the Senior Center would become ineligible for some grants without a 501(C)3.

Nancy suggested that in the spring the Council look at creating a "Friends Group" and this could be a good alternative. A Friends group could consist of former members of the Council on Aging and one or two current COA members. Susan Whitbourne pointed out that there could be some disadvantages.

Nancy thinks that the Council should go very slowly with this decision. The COA members agreed to discuss the creating of a "Friends Group" in the spring.

COA By-Law Update:

Town Meeting passed the COA By-Law article and now it has to go to the Attorney General's Office and be approved on at the state level.

COA Retreat:

The COA retreat scheduled for December 1st for members and staff was cancelled because there was not a quorum. Nancy stressed the importance of having a retreat to discuss long-range planning. Nancy will try to arrange for a time to have a retreat in the spring when all members can come.

NEW BUSINESS

New Experience Works Employee:

Nancy introduced the new Experience Works employee, Anita Chan-Randall. Experience Works is a job training program which takes people of a certain income bracket and places them in a non-profit agency to work and to

gain job skills. Anita is a tremendous help to all staff in the office. She has good computer and people skills. Anita is the second person that the Senior Center has acquired. Carol Hayward works in the lunch program and helps the staff in the offices also.

New Grant from HVES:

Maura has applied for renewal of the Title III grant for the "Kindred Spirits" (formerly Grandparents as Parents Support Group) and additional money for the Caregivers Support Group. Ruth Backes, a retired psychologist, will be the facilitator for a new 10-week session of the Caregivers Support Group which is beginning again in February. The groups are doing very well.

FY '07 Budget Guidelines:

Nancy prepared three budgets (reduced, needs and a status quo) for FY '07 and it has been forwarded to the Town Manager and Finance Director for review. These three budgets will then go to the Finance Committee and then on to Town Meeting in the spring. The present FY '06 operating budget appropriations are:

- Office Supplies \$1,500
- Dues & Subscriptions 600
- Center Activities 6,500

The Senior Center has had a larger cut in the present budget than other departments. With only \$6,500 in the Center Activities line item of the budget there is going to be a problem in the spring. There is no money for any training in the present budget and any training has had to come out of the Center Activities line item.

There is no growth in the reduced or status quo budgets. Nancy proposed for the needs (restoration) budget:

- Office Supplies \$2,500
- Dues & Subscriptions 700
- Center Activities 9,000
- Training/In-State Travel 1,000

This is in line with the true costs to run the Senior Center.

Susan Whitbourne asked what the fiscal situation is for other Senior Centers in the state. Nancy suggested that someone can research this, but knows that at least one Senior Center in Western Mass. has closed.

Elsie stated that elders are having a hard time staying in Amherst because of the high taxes. She suggested that the Tax Work Off Program is an option for seniors who own property. Maura explained that she oversees the Tax Work Off Program for Amherst and there are many seniors working. There are income guidelines and a senior can get up to \$750 each towards their taxes. There also have been articles in *The Senior Spirit* explaining the program. There are some openings for Amherst tax work-off jobs still available.

Hwei-Ling Greeney, Select Board Member, stated that at a budget meeting last evening, it was discussed that all departments are taking a hit budget-wise. It was suggested at that meeting that the Senior Center become more self-supporting. One way is to make the travel group more sufficient and to charge people from other towns. Nancy clarified that the Travel Club has been totally self-supporting since the 1980s. There is participation from other towns, and **everyone** pays their own way. Also, the Travel Club is donating \$400 bi-monthly to help cover printing and mailing expenses for each issue of *The Senior Spirit*.

Hwei-Ling stated that another aspect that was brought up was to consider the use of volunteers. Training them is an investment and there can be collaboration between staff and volunteers. Nancy stated that the Senior Center uses over 200 volunteers a year, more than any other department. The Senior Center uses volunteers for the Hostess Desk, to teach activities, to deliver meals, and many other things. The volunteers are fabulous but there has to be a safety net of staff involvement behind the scenes.

Susan Whitbourne stated that the bottom line is that the budget is not sufficient. The COA needs to write a letter to their legislators and perhaps even invite Rep. Ellen Story and Senator Rosenberg to a COA meeting. Nancy agreed this is a good idea but suggested that the COA wait until Town Meeting to see what support the Senior Center gets. Hwei-Ling suggested that the COA work with John Musante, Finance Director, and together approach the State Representatives. Hwei-Ling will pass the COA's concerns on to John Musante.

COA Secretary

Nancy explained that it has been difficult to keep a full COA membership. There are a few new members. The COA has never appointed a secretary for the COA for this reason and it is clear in the by-laws that the COA needs a secretary who is a COA member to take the minutes of the meetings. Right now a staff member takes

them. Nancy asked Rosemary Koffler if she is willing to be the secretary and she indicated that she was. At the next COA meeting, when Rosemary is present, the Board needs to appoint a secretary. Hwei-Ling stated that there is a real issue when staff takes minutes. She stated that boards and committees need to stay clear of staff taking minutes as it takes staff time. There is a clear message that it is essential that all committees and boards have a secretary who is a member to take the minutes as to not set a precedent.

STAFF REPORTS

Outreach Project:

Maura stated that the survey to interview Amherst elders 90+ has been completed. The goal of this survey is to identify unmet needs and to let seniors know what services we provide at the Senior Center. There are 24 people in this category who were interviewed. Two students from Susan Whitbourne's class and three community people did the interviewing. The interviewing of 80-89 year olds will begin next. There are 150-200 people in this category (excluding the Applewood community). It has yet to be decided if a random sampling or all of the people in this category will be interviewed.

The survey so far has been very interesting. There are many 90+ year olds who are living independently in their own home and are doing well.

Elsie suggested having an article in the newspaper that focuses on the 90+ to draw attention to this group of elders. Maura will look into having the Bulletin do an article.

Summary of Past Big Programs:

- Flu Clinic & Health Fair: The flu clinic and health fair was held on Saturday, November 19th, from 8-11 AM at the Amherst Regional Middle School. The Amherst Emergency Preparedness people used this forum as training. There were 250 flu shots given out and 50 more were needed. The Health Dept. is trying to get more vaccine to hold another flu clinic for people who still need a flu shot. Elsie mentioned that at the Health Fair she had her cholesterol tested for \$12.00, but was not told that she should have fasted before the test. As a result she got back some scary results. Nancy will pass this information along to the Health Department.

Impact of Medicare Part D:

The new Medicare Part D Program has been overwhelming and confusing for a lot of people. The S.H.I.N.E Representative, Cami Elbow, has been holding hours every Monday in the Computer Gallery to try to help people to choose a prescription drug program that fits their needs.

SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATES

This portion of the agenda was skipped as Al Byam was not present to talk about transportation, Jean Haggerty, was not present to give an update on Comprehensive Planning and Barbara Sutherland did not attend the last HVES meeting. Nancy did, however, mention that the transportation budget looks grim at the moment and there are going to be many budget meetings coming up.

Other Business:

Nancy mentioned to the COA members that she went to a Town Manager Search Committee meeting and gave her input and thoughts on what the new Town Manager should be aware of, and she encouraged others to go to a meeting and to voice their opinion.

Elsie mentioned that she was going to the White House Conference on Aging. Discussed will be the "Caring Homes Project" where a relative can be paid to take care of family members (i.e. adult children taking care of parents or relatives).

Next meeting is Thursday, February 9, 2006, 9:00– 10:30 AM. NO MEETING IN JANUARY 2006.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:32 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Erman, Management Assistant